

Washington, DC - With the House poised to pass the most comprehensive health insurance reform package since the creation of Medicare, Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today outlined key provisions of the bill that will strengthen coverage and lower costs for seniors. The health care reform legislation will improve the coordination and quality of Medicare benefits, expand home and community-based services to keep people in their homes instead of nursing homes, and extend the solvency of Medicare by nearly a decade.

"This bill is about security and stability for seniors," said Hinchey. "It protects against cuts to Medicare benefits, lowers out of pocket costs for prescription drugs by closing the 'donut hole,' improves coverage for preventative care, and cuts costly overpayments to insurance companies to help ensure that Medicare will be available for generations to come. More broadly, the legislation will put upstate New Yorkers in control of their health care choices, help drive down health care costs for families and small businesses, and ensure that nobody is denied coverage because of a pre-existing condition."

As soon as this bill goes into effect, seniors will begin to see relief. Medicare beneficiaries who hit the prescription drug coverage gap known as the "donut hole" will receive a \$250 rebate to make life-saving drugs more affordable. Preventative services like immunizations and screenings for diabetes, cancer and osteoporosis will be free of charge. A cap on annual out of pocket expenses for Medicare Beneficiaries start right away, and a new program will be created to improve the coordination of benefits to ensure that doctors can provide the highest quality care. To extend the long term solvency of Medicare, the bill eliminates overpayments to insurance companies, saving approximately \$150 billion over the next decade.

Hinchey also noted that while the bill represents a major step forward, it still does not accomplish everything that is needed to improve the delivery of health care. For instance, the bill lacks a provision that would allow Medicare to negotiate with pharmaceutical companies for bulk discount deals, which could save taxpayers up to \$156 billion over ten years. To address that and other issues, the congressman will continue working for additional legislation that further improves the quality of Medicare and makes health care more comprehensive, accessible and affordable for all Americans.